

## Air Products sponsors Young Welder of the Year

Air Products South Africa, sponsor of the South African Institute of Welding's (SAIW) Young Welder of the Year, sees the competition as another opportunity to further its aim of investing in the youth of this country. The company's corporate social investment (CSI) strategy has long been focused on education and training initiatives, especially in areas where there is an urgent need for skills development.



"Welding skills are critical in many industries and it is no secret that there is a dire shortage of engineering skills worldwide, specifically when it comes to expert welding. It is our great pleasure to have provided welding gases to facilitate this competition in the various areas of welding," says Josua Le Roux, General Manager: Central Support at Air Products South Africa.

The company has been closely involved with the Young Welder of the Year competition since its inception in 2004. For this year's competition, which was held from the 26th to the 30th January 2015 at SAIW's premises in Johannesburg, Air Products provided various specialist gases including argon for TIG welding and its special blends: Coogar 82 for MIG welding and Fluxblend for flux-core welding. In addition, Air Products also made a contribution towards accommodation and other costs related to the competition.

"We are passionate about training, skills development and the empowerment of young people in South Africa," says Le Roux. "It is our hope that the use of Air Products' range of specialist welding gases and the experience in taking part in this event will have an extremely positive impact on the future careers of these young welders."

Air Products South Africa, in taking a long-term view of the gas industry in this country, has put in place a capital investment programme of R2 billion for the development of critical infrastructure. 'G-Plant', at the company's flagship facility in Vanderbijlpark, was launched in June 2014, and its new facility at the Coega Industrial Development Zone (IDZ) was launched in November 2014, the first of its kind in the Eastern Cape. These are the fifteenth and sixteenth ASUs, respectively, to be built in South Africa by Air Products.

"While upgrading and developing infrastructure and technology is vital to our business, so is our investment in human skills development. Air Products strongly believes in enabling and empowering today's learners so that they can be effective

contributors to a thriving future economy," says Le Roux.

Some of Air Products' other CSI projects include the ongoing support of a ballet school in Alexandra for disadvantaged young learners. In addition, the company has established a partnership with global children's organisation Inmed in establishing aquaponics training programmes at regional high schools. Aquaponics is an innovative soilless crop growing technique which is particularly suitable for rural communities where water is scarce.

"It has been our pleasure and privilege to sponsor the Young Welder of the Year competition. Not only does this annual event resonate with our focus on skills development in young people, but we recognise welding as a sought-after skill in industries around the world. We thank the SAIW for this initiative and look forward to future opportunities to support young welders in their career growth and development," Le Roux concludes.

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